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FOLK-LORE SCRAP-BOOK.

THE DEVIL BUSH OF WEST AFRICA.—Under this title, in "Fetter's Southern Magazine" for April, 1893, Rev. C. C. Penick gave some account of an initiation, or system of instruction, for youth of both sexes, existing among the Vey people of Liberia. As this curious description is not likely, in its original place, to reach the eyes of many of those who would be interested, room is here made for a portion of the article. The Vey have attained a considerable measure of civilization, using an alphabet with written characters of their own invention, as well as spinning and weaving cloth, working iron, and making silver ornaments.

"What is the 'Devil Bush ?' you are ready to ask ; and so were we, but the question, though asked a thousand times over, remained unanswered. At its sound every native would close his lips, and veil even his eyes, with an impenetrable expression. We would be walking along a path, when suddenly the guide would stop, point to a small handful of grass taken on each side of the path, bent over and tied across it. That just meant you had to turn back, for a little farther on was the 'Devil Bush,' and to intrude into those sacred precincts meant — ah, well, he never told you what, but from his manner something as terrible as death. Men would bring their children into school, and the more honest and open of them would say : 'Daddy, I leave my gal in your hand until time for her to go in 'Devil Bush.' Others would give you no such warning, but about the time the girl reached her eleventh year, or a little later, she would receive word by a hurried messenger to come at once ; her mother or father, or grandmother, was ready to die, or, as they expressed it, 'live die.' They, of course, left hurriedly, never to return to the mission again, save as somebody's wife, after two or three years' absence. Upon asking them why they did not return sooner, as they invariably promised to do, the one answer came, 'I have been in Devil Bush.' Nor was the success with the boys much greater. The nearer a boy was united to a noble family the more certain was he to be torn from the mission on one pretext or another, whether he were willing or not, and, once in the confines of that unknowable thing, the 'Devil Bush,' you would see him no more for months, and sometimes for years."

The writer goes on to relate that a missionary had drawn into his school the son of the "Queen of the Woman's Devil Bush," and that, after this youth had returned to his home in order to receive initiation, the missionary was invited to visit the town of the Queen ; refused admission to the precincts of the "Devil Bush," he nevertheless bought entrance by a bribe, but was allowed to behold only meaningless performances. On the same day, however, a native from a distance entered the town intoxicated and began to make an uproar ; he was remonstrated with and informed that this was the town of the "Queen of the Devil Bush," to which he replied that he did not care for the "Devil Bush" or its Queen. He was left undisturbed on the same night, but on the morrow taken before the Queen,

to whom it is said that he repeated the blasphemy, as it was considered, although warned that he would be excused on an apology. He was immediately seized, hurried to an open space in the centre of the town, stripped, tied, and so fixed that he could not move. Then many bunches of small rattan splits were brought, and skilful fingers began to wrap his fingers and toes, drawing the splits with all their might. After five hours of suffering he was ransomed by a friend, but died as a consequence of his treatment. This the missionary witnessed.

"It is said that if a man is unusually cruel to one of his wives (for he may have as many as he is able to buy) the matter is brought before the "Woman's Devil Bush;" the case is tried, and if it is a true one the man is condemned to die; a person is appointed, skilled in the art, to poison him, and in due course of time he dies. The death is made a long and painful or a quick one, according as they wish to inflict greater or less punishment. Again, if the tribe decides to go to war, that declaration of war is not complete until it has been referred to the women and they pass upon and approve it. In addition to these powers that we see cropping out, it is certain that the women are instructed in all the arts that are considered necessary to a good wife and mother, ere she is permitted to leave the 'Devil Bush' and be taken by her betrothed husband."

"When I sought information as to the 'Man Devil Bush,' I found myself at first completely foiled. It was not until many of the boys grew up and learned to trust me that, little by little, I gathered the links which, when woven together, gave me some idea of its mysteries. It is an institution for instructing every man in the tribe as to his duty to the commonwealth. It seems that no one can hold office until he has gone through the 'Devil Bush.' The diploma is not given on sheepskin, but on that of the graduate by a number of deep scratches from the back of the neck a short distance down the backbone. When these heal they leave rectangular scars raised, so as to be distinctly seen and known. When a boy enters the 'Devil Bush' he is stripped, and a most careful examination made of all his scars, and these are noted in the records. It is said that the 'Devil' never lets one in his 'Bush' get hurt or scarred save with the diploma mark. This is a most unfortunate assertion and has cost many a life. Should a boy get hurt in any way, it matters not how, he is carefully watched and every effort made to heal him without a scar; but, should these efforts fail and scars be left, those scars seal his doom. He is killed, and his family is notified in the following way: Whenever the inmates of the 'Devil Bush' wish to obtain food they disguise themselves so as not to be recognized by any one; they then make a raid on the nearest town, blowing a peculiar note on a trumpet made of an elephant's tusk, with a lizard's skin so stretched over it as to produce weird vibrations. At this sound the inhabitants of the town hurriedly place food out in the streets, and entering their houses close their doors, so as not to see the 'Devil.' The whole raiding party then pass through the town, taking charge of all the food they find, and leaving a broken earthen pot at the door of the mother of the boy who has been killed. That broken pot says, 'Your part is

spoiled and broken ;' or, in other words, 'Your boy is dead.' This is all she ever learns of the fate of her boy ; just the story the jagged lips of a broken earthen pot tell. Henceforth she mourns with a great void of heart, facing the deep mysteries of the terrible ' Devil Bush.' "

The writer adds that it is certain death for one of the boys to see or speak to a woman or girl while in the " Devil Bush " unless he has been released on furlough ; and an example is given in which an eye-witness describes the manner in which an inconsiderate offence of this sort was punished by death, the boy being bound to a long pole, which was then raised and allowed to fall with the culprit. The instruction is said to include, as a sort of advanced course, the use of magic arts.

SUPERSTITIONS IN NEWFOUNDLAND. — From the columns of a Newfoundland journal, signed by initials, for Christmas, 1894, are copied the following superstitious beliefs : —

" The spurious letter of Our Lord to Abzarus, King of Edessa, is used all round the country, and worn especially by women in expectation of motherhood, and with other charms religiously preserved. I have been informed that a thriving business is done in some town printing-offices in the sale of these printed spells.

" A poor woman at Chance Cove, suffering from toothache, lamented to me that, after she had tried every remedy for this ' hell of all diseases,' she had worn our Lord's letter for a fortnight without avail ; and a poor fellow at King's Cove assured me that, as a last resource for the cure of this ugly monster, he had scraped some dust from a tombstone and drank it in water without effecting a cure.

" A man at Change Islands, in the district of Nôtre Dame Bay, told me he had been ridden to death by an old hag, until a knowledgeable old man advised him to drive nails through a shingle, and lash it to his breast when he went to bed, with the nails sticking up. With great solemnity he assured me that, thus fortified, he had just forgotten the world, when down came the old hag all aflop, but with a hideous scream she went ' off quicker 'n she come on.' His rest has been peaceful ever since.

" At Burin, a few years ago, a murderer declared he would even touch the murdered man as proof of his innocence ; the prevailing belief being that the wound of the murdered man would bleed if he did but touch.

" Fishermen will not proceed to sea if, on heaving anchor, the vessel should wear against the sun. An instance of this occurred a few years ago at Channel. A vessel ready for the seal-fishery swung the unlucky way on heaving anchor ; the skipper was disturbed ; the crew, almost mutinous at his persisting to proceed, declared ill-luck would follow them. Within a week the vessel was again in Channel — with the skipper dead and the superstition more deeply rooted than ever.

" 'I'd as lief cut my right hand off,' said a skipper to me, 'as cut down a maiden dog-berry tree ; a man is sure to die as does it.' This same old salt, while we were becalmed, kept throwing coppers overboard, to buy, as he said, 'a ha'porth of wind.' My remonstrance had only the effect of his